ISSUE BRIEF

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Improving the healthy eating, physical activity and food security of Californians.



By Steve Sternberg

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Wednesday, August 20, 20039

Most heart attacks caused

by an unhealthy lifestyle Studies 'blow away' myth of bad genes

Two sweeping studies released today appear to

explode the long-held myth that half of heart

attacks result from bad genes or bad luck...



Workplace Nutrition and Physical Activity

An overview of the facts, case studies and information resources

An epidemic is attacking Americans-claiming 300,000 or more lives a year.1 It is the second largest cause of preventable death in America, behind only tobacco use.2 The killer? Unhealthy eating and physical inactivity.

he health problems resulting from these twin behaviors are costing the United States economy \$117 billion dollars a year.3 In California, the cost is as much as \$24.6 billion.4 This cost is increasingly borne by California's employers, who see their insurance costs

Californians are overweight or obese6

and workers' compensation 57% of all adult premiums go up as productivity declines.5 Unhealthy workers require more medical care, take more sick days, and are less productive on the job.

As a nation, we spend much more to exacerbate this costly epidemic than to prevent it, by promoting unhealthy foods and creating barriers to physical activity. Some fast food companies spend almost \$650 million a year on advertising, yet the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) spends less than \$10 million on programs related to nutrition and physical activity and

HEALTHY EATING





AT WORK AND HOME

AT HOME

If working Californians don't have access to fruits and vegetables on the job, they will need to consume between 1 and 2 servings every waking hour after work to meet the goal of 5 to 9 servings a day.

the National Cancer Institute spends less than \$5 million a year on the National 5 A Day Program.7,8 Sprawl prevails over smart

growth that preserves inner cities and open spaces. According to one study, "U.S. adults living in sprawling communities weigh more, [and] are more likely to be obese..."10 In the years between 1977 and 1995, adult daily walking trips declined by 40 percent, and the trend continues.11

If there is good news, it is that this epidemic is entirely preventable and does not require expensive drugs or medical treatments. Improving diet by eating more fruits and vegetables and increasing physical activity can help prevent the diseases brought on by inactivity and poor diet.

Healthy Eating and Physical Activity at Work

One of the best places to help Californians change these behaviors is on the job. Over seventy percent of working-age Californians are employed.¹² Californians spend so many of their waking hours on the job that achieving healthy eating habits and reaching physical activity goals is virtually impossible without addressing these issues at work. Without access to fruits and vegetables on the job, a working adult would have to eat 1 to 2 servings of fruits or vegetables every waking hour after work in order to meet the recommendation of 5 to 9 servings daily; this might help explain why only 27 percent of Californians report meeting this goal.¹³ Likewise, in order to manage the 10,000 steps a day recommended by experts, sedentary workers would have to spend most of their evenings in motion.¹⁴ For many, work is also where the community is, and as in all social and behavioral reforms, having a "social network" is a strong motivator for success.15

What Employers Can Do

Companies of all sizes and types have implemented employee nutrition and physical activity programs, and many report benefits to employee health and the bottom line. In fact, the

World Health Organization reports, "Workplace physical activity programs in the USA can reduce short-term sick leave (by 6 to 32 percent), reduce health care costs (by 20 to 55 percent), and increase productivity (by 2 to 52 percent)."

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Johnson & Johnson estimates \$5 million in annual savings through wellness programs 16

Despite the benefits of employee wellness programs, there are also significant barriers to implementation, especially in smaller companies and those that employ lower-wage workers. Many of these employers do not offer insurance benefits, so they do not accrue the benefits of lower health care costs that would result from healthier employees. Likewise, they frequently employ transient workforces, so there is less economic benefit to improving the long-term health of their current workers. Other employers are reluctant to "interfere," citing concerns about preserving employee privacy, incurring additional costs for wellness programs, increasing sick time resulting from injury, and – most significantly – increasing liability and insurance costs. 19

There are ways to mitigate many of these concerns:

- Employee privacy can be protected by ensuring that programs are designed to offer the entire workforce equal opportunity for good health, rather than targeting individual employees. Rather than resenting the invasion of privacy, many employees view nutrition and physical activity programs as an added job perk.²⁰
- Many worksite activities are cost-neutral and, for those programs that do require an outlay of money or employee time, the net benefits can outweigh the actual costs. There is strong quantitative evidence that having fitter employees reduces medical costs.²¹ In addition, health care insurers may be willing to partner with employers to promote workplace health initiatives as a cost saving measure.²²
- Small business owners have very real concerns that offering physical activity programs on-site will add to their insurance liability. However, there are creative ways to avoid liability issues, including partnerships and off-site programs.

Employers can take many steps to direct their employees to good nutrition and physical activity, and many are neither expensive nor difficult. While not every business can offer a multi-million dollar gym with stairclimbers or a nutritionally balanced free lunch, most can offer workers healthy options in vending machines, access to walking routes, or time for physical activity breaks.

Provide healthy eating options at work

Promoting healthy eating can be cost neutral, incurs no insurance liability, and is easy to implement. One of the most effective ways to encourage employees to make better food choices is to improve access to nutritious foods.²³ Management can work with outside food vendors, including catering trucks and on-site food services, to ensure that healthy foods are available.

Companies with on-site cafeterias can provide nutrition information for food items and encourage the availability of healthy entrees, salads, and fruits and vegetables. One firm experimented with encouraging healthy eating by subsidizing healthy foods and funding the subsidy with a premium on high-fat foods, such as french fries. After two months, they found a 50 percent increase in the sales of healthy foods and a corresponding 50 percent decrease in the sales of high-fat foods.²⁴

Replacing junk food in vending machines with healthy snacks can be a no-cost way of contributing to employee nutrition. In a study of worksite vending machines, when low-fat snacks were provided at a 50 percent discount, sales increased 93 percent. Increased sales offset the cost of the discount, and profits remained steady.²⁵

Companies that provide snacks in the coffee room or for office meetings can offer fruits, vegetables or other healthy alternatives. Management can make arrangements for on-site farmers' markets or produce trucks. Companies that provide lunchrooms for employees can offer educational materials, such as newsletters, recipes, brochures, and posters, that show the benefits of eating fruits and vegetables at work.²⁶

Help employees connect with nutrition assistance programs

Nutrition assistance programs, such as food stamps and school meals, are designed to help working families stay healthy and productive. Lower-wage, part-time or seasonal workers under financial pressure may qualify for food stamps, as may workers' friends, acquaintances and neighbors. School lunches are available to all children, and students from lower income families may qualify for free or reduced price meals. Knowing that their children are receiving nutritious school lunches, breakfasts, after school snacks and summer meals can provide peace of mind to working parents. Employers can provide information about these resources and encourage workers to take advantage of them.

Offer support for physical activity

To support employee physical activity, employers can offer changing space and lockers for those employees who want to exercise at lunch, and provide secure bike racks or locked bike storage. Empty office space can be provided to employees who want to organize their own exercise classes. Even in companies where space is at a premium, stairwells can be unlocked and spruced up so that they offer an inviting place to walk. Employers in unsafe neighborhoods can work with police and community groups to provide safe areas near worksites for employees to walk. Off-site activities can be organized around

physical activities; instead of a company happy hour, consider a frisbee tournament, a firm softball game, or a dancing lesson.

Find partners

Employers can reduce the budget impact of on-site programs by finding health care plans and industrial health care clinics to

share program costs.²⁷ Commercial fitness centers and community centers can provide either on-site classes or discounted programs at their own locations. Other partners might be unions and local community organizations.

Implement physical activity incentive programs and offer healthy off-site activities

Tested, effective incentive programs that offer rewards for on- and off-site healthy behaviors are a low cost way to provide encouragement. Take Action! and the American Cancer Society's Active For Life are two such ten-week programs that encourage physical activity at home, walking to work, and lunchtime physical activity.28 Agilent Technologies, based in Palo Alto, California, offered such a program and, in

ten weeks, 310 employees walked 15,648 miles and lost a total of 471 pounds.²⁹ Although employers can add incentives, prizes don't have to be big; often the reward is as much in peer recognition as it is in the actual prize. One county encourages employees to walk 500 miles. The incentive for finishing the program is a sweatshirt.30

Encourage walking as part of RideShare programs

Employers reluctant to budget for physical activity programs might be interested in linking walking and biking programs to existing rideshare locations. Earthlink, in Pasadena, California, for instance, offers rebates for bicycle, rollerblade, and walking shoe purchases, and it will reimburse 100 percent of the cost of safety inspections and tune ups for bicycles or rollerblades. The firm offers similar incentives for those who bike or walk to the Metro Rail.31

Shift schedules or extend lunch periods to allow time for physical activity

Time-shifting to create 45-minute lunch periods will give

workers 30 minutes to exercise and 15 minutes to eat. Lunch periods are often considered "off duty" periods, removing company liability for lunchtime workouts.32 The 15 minutes of extended lunch hour can easily be made up in the morning or evening. Alternately, allowing workers to start or end their days earlier can help them

access an outside fitness class not otherwise available.

recognize that poor health means lower productivity and higher health insurance costs."

"More businesses need to

Secretary Tommy G. Thompson Department of Health and Human Services September 16, 2003

TAKE ACTION!

Take Action! is a ten-week worksite health program that uses behavior change theory, skill development, peer support, goal setting and team building. It is free to businesses and all of the tools can be accessed

Take Action! gives workers credit for doing self-monitored physical activities, and asks that partici-pants add a couple of minutes of physical activity every day until they reach a total of at least 30 min-utes. After ten weeks, those minutes add up to a noticeable lifestyle change.

Take Action! is a public service of the California Health Promotion Collaborative.

www.ca-takeaction.com

Encourage movement at work

If participants agree, office meetings can be held standing up and one-on-one meetings can take place while walking around the block. Employees can be encouraged to take stretch breaks, to use the stairs between floors instead of the elevator, and to walk on their breaks instead of sitting around. Institutionalizing physical activity breaks by creating walking clubs can encourage more employees to get involved. In San Bernardino County, 1,600 county employees belong to a breaktime walking club.²⁴

What Employees Can Do

Many worksite programs start with employee suggestions and employee volunteers. One dedicated advocate for workplace programs is often enough to get the ball rolling and to convince co-workers and managers to get involved. Employees can ask employers to facilitate worksite physical activity and nutrition programs and should let employers know of the demonstrated cost benefits to having such programs on-site.

Demand nutritious food from outside vendors

Food providers will respond to the needs of their market. If enough workers get together to demand that more healthy foods be provided, outside vendors, such as vending machine suppliers, catering trucks and on-site food services, will respond to the demand.

Practice healthy behaviors at work

One employee can start a healthy eating movement at work by filling a candy bowl with cherry tomatoes or bringing fruit or vegetable salad to office parties. Similarly, employees can start workout classes during lunch or breaks. Tips on physical activity and nutritious cooking can be posted in common rooms, and employees can buddy up with partners for healthy eating and physical activity encouragement.

Walk or bike to work

For those who live close to the worksite, walking or biking to work can actually save time because it combines commute

and exercise time.

Employees who live further from worksites might consider walking to and from public transportation or carpool drop-offs. Those who drive may consider parking a few blocks from work and walking the rest of the way.

What Community Organizations Can Do

Community organizations are an important piece of the puzzle, and they can take an active role in encouraging local employers to promote workplace programs. Small employers, those without human resources departments or sophisticated wellness programs, stand the most to gain from active partnerships with community organizations.

Partner with employers to provide on-site and localized nutrition and physical activity programs

Community organizations can let employers, both large and small, know of programs or other support offered in their neighborhoods. Community centers may offer after-work classes or shower and changing facilities. Community organizations can also offer educational materials and even break-time speakers to assist in employee nutrition and physical activity programs.

Create and support policy initiatives to improve worksite nutrition and physical activity programs

Community organizations are often well positioned to work with local governments to bring about change. Community organizations can work with government to provide safe physical activity areas near worksites and work with employers to accommodate worksite programs. On a statewide level, community organizations can help to work with legislators and legislative staff to bring about policy changes that would help promote worksite physical activity and nutrition. One such area is corporate liability. Employer focus groups have indicated that if companies had protection from liability for promoting physical activity (similar to "Good Samaritan" laws), they would be more inclined to provide on-site physical activity opportunities. Another area might be working to establish food service standards in all public buildings such that at least 50 percent of food served meets guidelines for healthy food choices.

Walking is given another push Breast cancer risk reduced by exercise By Rita Rubin Postmenopausal women can reduce their risk of five days a week, according to a study out today... Wednesday September 10, 2003³³

Kaiser Permanente Employees Move Together for Wellness³⁶

Recognizing that obesity is costing Kaiser Permanente \$220 million annually in additional health care costs, Kaiser Permanente of Northern California (KPNC) decided to attack the problem in its own home, by creating "We're Moving Together!" This program, implemented in the 12 KPNC health facilities, has three major components: Physical Activity and Weight Management; Environmental Changes to Worksite and Cafeteria; and Safety and Injury Reduction Initiative. Facilities were free to choose one or all of the components. To reinforce the program's emphasis on healthy eating, two of the facilities have begun to organize on-site weekly farmers' markets. Staff has praised the program for increasing their access to fresh produce. The market is open to the whole community, and an ancillary benefit has been widespread community appreciation. Richmond Medical Center has undertaken a stairwell beautification program in order to encourage employees to use the stairs instead of elevators. They have contracted for an artist to create a stairwell mural which will be painted by employees' children and by children from the community. KPNC is working with outside vendors that run each facility cafeteria to provide lowfat healthy dining alternatives. Although KPNC has no quantitative data yet, anecdotal evidence suggests that the program is increasing employee satisfaction and even aiding in recruitment efforts.

San Bernardino County Employees Walk Every Day³⁷

For the past five years, 1,600 San Bernardino County employees have been walking on their breaks as part of the workplace Walking Club. The Walking Club operates in most of the departments and in most geographic areas. The program is incentive based, with rewards at various mileage levels; 52 employees have achieved the ultimate 500-mile mark. Walkers are encouraged to walk every day and to use one full break period per day for their walking. Every worksite location determines the walking course, and each full break walked is considered a mile. Not only does this simplify bookkeeping, but also it encourages each walker to set a pace that is realistic for his or her level of fitness. A coordinator in the Wellness Department spends one to two hours a week arranging for the distribution of incentives,

assisted by 100 site coordinators who spend only a few minutes a week reporting. The full reward package costs \$48 for each walker who reaches 500 miles, a cost borne by each walker's individual department. The county, which is self-insured, has had only minor walking-related injuries, and it reports no significant insurance implications. The casual nature of the program has encouraged many nonmembers to go along for the walk, increasing the program's reach. Walkers come from all job classification levels, including hourly and professional employees. The program continues to grow as additional departments ask to join. A 1999 survey of club members indicated that 83 percent of the participants reported a reduction in stress, 46 percent reported weight loss, and 64 percent reported increased energy levels.

American Apparel: Making Life Better for Low-Income Garment Workers³⁸

American Apparel takes a holistic approach to the wellness of its employees. The t-shirt manufacturer, located in downtown Los Angeles, employs 1,300, mostly in sewing jobs. The majority of the employees are women, primarily Latina, although there is a substantial Asian population. American Apparel provides subsidized healthy lunches to employees, including daily salads and fruit offerings. The firm is building an on-site health and wellness facility, which will offer drop-in health counseling and physical activity classes to be held before and after hours and during lunch breaks. A pilot health club membership program is also planned. Nutritional information, translated into Spanish and Asian languages, is available on-site through a collaborative effort with the nonprofit Garment Workers Center.

American Apparel has a formalized program to extend health benefits at a low premium and to assist workers in applying for Healthy Families insurance. Massage therapists visit the worksite to offer massages to seamstresses who are at risk for repetitive motion injuries. American Apparel's loyalty to its employees has led to a remarkably stable workforce, with reduced absenteeism and substantially fewer turnovers than in the industry as a whole.

Worksite Wellness LA (WWLA) Reaches Out to Underserved Populations³⁹

Founded in 1996 as the Worksite Wellness Project, WWLA (www.wwla.net) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to improving the health status of low-income, medically underserved workers in Los Angeles County. WWLA services worksites in Central Los Angeles, South Los Angeles, and Vernon. Its mission includes helping workers get access to health care and giving them information to improve their overall health. As part of this mission, WWLA conducts on-site nutrition workshops at small businesses employing low-wage workers. The sessions are conducted in Spanish and are geared to the lower literacy level of many of the workers. Sessions involve a presentation and distribution of flyers and collateral materials, including brochures and cookbooks provided by the California Nutrition Network, which encourage fruit and vegetable consumption and physical activity. Currently, WWLA works with approximately 30 businesses, 70 percent of which are garment businesses, while others include food processors, community-based organizations, and even a hotel. In a recent evaluation of employer satisfaction, most employers suggested that they are pleased to have had the opportunity to bring WWLA to their worksites. "If the employees are happy, then we are happy because the employees ARE the company," writes one participating employer.40

Agilent Technologies Follows Through with At-Risk Employees⁴¹

Agilent Technologies, with 5,000 employees throughout the San Francisco Bay Area, has taken aggressive action to incorporate employee physical fitness and nutrition into its Occupational Health Department. The program is led by on-site occupational nurses at each location. They are supported by facilities that include on-site gyms at six Bay Area locations.

Recently, Agilent contracted with a private vendor to supervise a ten-week walking and fitness program that offered incentives, support, and weekly coaching via e-mail. The cost of admission: a pedometer (readily available at sporting goods stores for \$3.00 to \$50.00). In Palo Alto, 310 employees participated, walking 15,648 miles and losing 471 pounds in the process.

Agilent's program includes proactive support for at-risk employees. Hypertension awareness programs offer on-site blood pressure testing. Employees with high blood pressure are sent to their own doctors and then, with their doctor's permission, are encouraged to work with the occupational nurses to set up a physical activity program, including three exercise sessions a week. Employees in the program have their blood pressure monitored on-site on a daily basis or as needed.

Physical therapists work on-site with employees recovering from injuries to help them transfer from physical therapy into exercise programs that will help them heal. The weekly employee newsletter includes health news, written by the occupational nurses and tailored to employee needs and concerns. Nutrition programs are offered on-site on an occasional basis, and future programs will include a presentation by a registered dietitian and access to one-on-one nutrition guidance.

County of Riverside Leads with Wellness by Example 42

The Department of Public Health Nutrition Services in Riverside County is taking leadership for a county-wide initiative to get employees involved with wellness activities by instituting Wellness by Example. Department employees participated in the Take Action! program and plan to launch the program county-wide. Other programs will include the promotion of walking routes, healthy cooking classes, nutrition education using the 5 a Day Nutrition and Physical Activity Toolbox for Community Educators, and weight management classes. In addition, the program will offer employees with at-risk children the opportunity to enroll in the KinderShape® KidShape® and TeenShape® behavior change programs.

MPI Indiana Fineblanking Puts Employees in Charge 43

This manufacturing plant, servicing the automotive industry, is located in rural Indiana. After providing generous wellness benefits and activities in the 1990s, the plant management is grappling with how to keep up workplace wellness programs in a leaner environment that emphasizes "just in time" production. One solution has been in using a company volunteer "wellness committee" to work with the Human Resources Manager to suggest company wellness activities

that meet the current needs of the employees. The committee has representatives from all departments and schedules its meetings to accommodate workers from two shifts. The company uses outside wellness programs to provide incentives for walking and exercise program participants. A recent 10K walking program had participants, from the custodians to the general manager, wearing pedometers at work to count their steps. Other low-cost wellness programs include organizing company softball games and offering nutritious food options in on-site vending machines.

L.L. Bean Gets Manufacturing Workers Standing Up to Stretch and Sitting Down to Healthy Lunches!⁴⁴

Maine sporting goods manufacturer L.L. Bean has been incorporating stretch breaks into its workday for the past 14 years. Almost every department has some sort of formalized program, with strategies tailored to the work and stretch needs of each specific workgroup.

On the manufacturing floors, there are three formalized 5-minute stretch periods each day. Every worker on the floor stops to take part in the stretch break, which is led by a trained co-worker. Stretching is mandatory for everyone on the floor, including management and visitors. The leaders are trained by Wellness Specialists, and they stretch with their co-workers in groups of 5 to 20. Stretch breaks are in addition to regular breaks. In-house studies have shown that productivity gains have offset the stretch time by 100 percent, and the program contributes to reduced injuries and sick days.

L.L. Bean has also applied its philosophy that "healthy, active people make happier and more productive employees" in its cafeterias, subsidizing healthy food options by putting a premium on the cost of high-fat foods. With the subsidy in place, the company offers bowls of salads for \$1.60 and plates for \$2.99. These are accompanied by a range of reduced-fat dressings. The subsidized healthy foods outsell the higher fat items, meaning that the program runs at a cost to the company, but the company Health Manager views this as a sign of success. For L.L. Bean, stretch breaks and subsidized lunches are only parts of a comprehensive workplace wellness program that includes free access to on-site physical fitness centers for all employees and semi-annual fitness incentive programs.

First Chicago Bank Gets Employees into the Competitive Spirit 45

First Chicago Bank is testing several behavior modification programs at different worksites. One program that shows promise is their wellness competition. Teams of five employees volunteer to aid each other in making healthy lifestyle changes over a six-month period. Each team is scored on various measures, such as weight loss and muscular flexibility, decreased blood pressure and cholesterol levels, and other health indicators. The team with the highest total score receives gift certificates from a local sporting goods store. The First Chicago vice president in charge of the program explains, "When you have small groups of employees supporting each other, they develop a sense of camaraderie. Ideally, they want high-risk employees on their teams because they can potentially earn the greatest number of points when they achieve changes. That's one way you attract high-risk employees into the competition."

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POLICY RESOURCES

American Cancer Society: Active For Life http://www.cancer.org/docroot/PED/content/PED_1_5X_Active_For_Life.asp Offers worksite activity programs and information.

America's Walking

www.pbs.org/americaswalking

Features health and fitness advice from walking advocate Mark Fenton.

California 5 a Day — for Better Health! Campaign

www.ca5aday.com

Provides information on promoting 5 to 9 servings of fruits and vegetables and 30 to 60 minutes of physical activity every day.

California Center for Public Health Advocacy

www.publichealthadvocacy.org

Offers information about Senate Bill 19/school food standards.

California Food Policy Advocates

www.cfpa.net

Works to increase Californians' access to nutritious, affordable foods.

California Nutrition Network for Healthy, Active Families www.ca5adav.com

A network of projects and initiatives to increase fruit and vegetable consumption, physical activity, and food security.

California Task Force on Youth and Workplace Wellness www.wellnesstaskforce.org

Creates and promotes policies to decrease obesity rates in California.

Institute for Health and Productivity Management

www.ihpm.org

Data and services related to employee health that affect work performance/costs.

Medstat

www.medstat.com

Designs information solutions to strengthen healthcare policy and management decision-making.

National Cancer Institute's National 5 A Day Program

www.5aday.gov

Provides science-based information and resources to increase fruit and vegetable consumption to 5 to 9 daily servings.

National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion www.cdc.gov/nccdphp

Conducts studies to better understand the causes of chronic diseases and supports programs to promote healthy behaviors.

Produce for Better Health Foundation

www.5aday.com

Provides information, resources, and tools to increase fruit and vegetable consumption to 5 to 9 daily servings.

Shape Up America

www.shapeup.org

Offers information on weight management and increasing physical activity.

The Health Project

http://healthproject.stanford.edu

A non-profit private/public consortium that evaluates, promotes, and distributes wellness programs. Home of the C. Everett Koop National Health Awards.

University of Minnesota, School of Public Health

http://www.ahc.umn.edu/ahc_content/colleges/sph/sph_news/nutrition.pdf Provides guidelines for offering healthy foods at meetings and catered events.

USDA: Food and Nutrition Information Center

www.nal.usda.gov/fnic/dga

Provides information on the Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

World Health Organization, Department of Noncommunicable Disease (NCD) Prevention and Health Promotion

www.who.int/hpr

Provides information on the World Health Organization's Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health.



Please visit us at www.ca5aday.com or call 1-888-EAT-FIVE.

Funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture Food Stamp Program, an equal opportunity provider and employer,

through the California Nutrition Network for Healthy Active Families.

For information about the

California Food Stamp Program, please call 1-800-952-5253.

